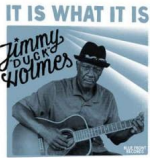


Jimmy 'Duck' Holmes - It Is What It Is (2016)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 30 December 2019 16:39 - Last Updated Monday, 01 March 2021 16:05

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A1 Buddy Brown 5:37 A2 Pencil and Paper 5:35 A3 It Is What It Is 5:26 A4 Love Alone 3:53 B1 Evil 6:27 B2 It Had To Be the Devil 5:49 B3 So Glad 4:16 B4 Slow Down 4:00
Jimmy "Duck" Holmes - Vocals, Guitar, Harp

Bentonia blues are a style of the blues born in a tiny town in Mississippi. Skip James was the first famed artist who used that distinctive open-E minor chord tuning. Jack Owens continued that style and now Jimmy "Duck" Holmes continues in the Bentonia school of music style. Throbbing rhythms and moaning vocals are not every listener's cup of tea, but it is a cool and primal sort of sound that grabs you and does not let go.

The traditional "Buddy Brown" opens the album. Things starts off with a heavy solo cut where Holmes plays a heavy RL Burnside style throbbing, hypnotic guitar and testifies to us vocally. Following that is "Pencil and Paper," another rhythmic beat with some nice guitar picking and percussive slapping/tapping that carry the tune. The vocals tell a story of wanting to get in touch with his woman- he's got no phone and wants to just drop her one or two lines. Holmes blows a little harp here, too. Next is "Love Alone" where Holmes tells us love alone won't do in life. The acoustic guitars' simplicity and his howling lyric match up well. "Evil" is another traditional cut and Holmes gives it his all in that minimal approach he takes with songs. Evil has taken his woman and wrecked his life and now it's about to take his wife. Holmes blows some more guttural harp here as he strums out the rhythm.

"It Had to Be the Devil" is the third and final traditional cut. Holmes uses his electric guitar and lots of distortion here as he groans and shouts out the lyrics. "So Glad" returns to the brighter acoustic sound as Holmes belts out the simple but effective lyrics. "Slow Down" takes the tempo way down as Holmes moans for us once again as he tells his girl she's moving too fast and that she needs to change her ways. He finishes with "It Was What It Was," a song where

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Holmes sings about longing for freedom.

Six originals and three traditional tunes are what is offered. Dick Waterman wrote the liner notes and books Holmes. Produced Michael Schulze runs the record label and tells us in his notes inside the cover that he's working to preserve this music. Henry Stuckey created Bentonia Blues and never got recorded. Schulze wants to capture this raw and primitive music for us and recorded the songs in the Blue Front Café, an old juke joint. Trains, ceiling fans and other noises move in and out of the recording, adding a charm and authenticity to the music. The place was home to Stuckey, Skip James and the other Bentonia bluesmen and serves as a great canvas to capture this music.

I will warn the unwary listener that this may not be your style of music. The music is simplistic yet complex. It is repetitive yet flowing. It brings us to a period and place where perhaps time has stopped and we get to sample music in a form as it was one hundred or more years ago. You may not like the dissonance. You may not like the other worldly-ness. But then again, it may just seduce you and make you want some more. ---Steve Jones, bluesblastmagazine.com

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